No. 21. PRICE SIXPENCE APRIL 20.

The Last Chronicle of Barset

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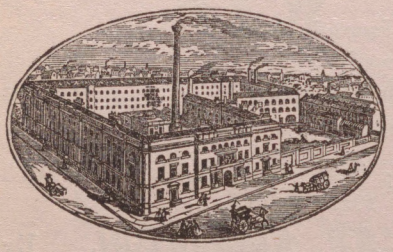

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"Because of Papa's disgrace."

CHAPTER LIII.

ROTTEN ROW.

LILY had heard nothing as to the difficulty about her horse, and could therefore enjoy her exercise without the drawback of feeling that her uncle was subjected to an annoyance. She was in the habit of going out every day with Bernard and Emily Dunstable, and their party was generally joined by others who would meet them at Mrs. Thorne's house. For Mrs. Thorne was a very hospitable woman, and there were many who liked well enough to go to her house. Late in the afternoon there would be a great congregation of horses before the door,—sometimes as many as a dozen; and then the cavalcade would go off into the Park, and there it would become scattered. As neither Bernard nor Miss Dunstable were unconscionable lovers, Lily in these scatterings did not often find herself neglected or lost. Her cousin would generally remain with her, and as in those days she had no "it" of her own she was well pleased that he should do so.

But it so happened that on a certain afternoon she found herself riding in Rotten Row alone with a certain stout gentleman whom she constantly met at Mrs. Thorne's house. His name was Onesiphorus Dunn, and he was usually called Siph by his intimate friends. It had seemed to Lily that everybody was an intimate friend of Mr. Dunn's, and she was in daily fear lest she should make a mistake and call him Siph herself. Had she done so it would not have mattered in the least. Mr. Dunn, had he observed it at all, would neither have been flattered nor angry. A great many young ladies about London did call him Siph, and to him it was quite natural that they should do so. He

was an Irishman, living on the best of everything in the world, with apparently no fortune of his own, and certainly never earning anything. Everybody liked him, and it was admitted on all sides that there was no safer friend in the world, either for young ladies or young men, than Mr. Onesiphorus Dunn. He did not borrow money, and he did not encroach. He did like being asked out to dinner, and he did think that they to whom he gave the light of his countenance in town owed him the return of a week's run in the country. He neither shot, nor hunted nor fished, nor read, and yet he was never in the way in any house. He did play billiards, and whist, and croquet—very badly. He was a good judge of wine, and would occasionally condescend to look after the bottling of it on behalf of some very intimate friend. He was a great friend of Mrs. Thorne's, with whom he always spent ten days in the autumn at Chaldicotes.

Bernard and Emily were not insatiable lovers, but, nevertheless, Mrs. Thorne had thought it proper to provide a fourth in the riding-parties, and had put Mr. Dunn upon this duty. "Don't bother yourself about it, Siph," she had said; "only if those lovers should go off philandering out of sight, our little country lassie might find herself to be nowhere in the Park." Siph had promised to make himself useful, and had done so. There had generally been so large a number in their party that the work imposed on Mr. Dunn had been very light. Lily had never found out that he had been especially consigned to her as her own cavalier, but had seen quite enough of him to be aware that he was a pleasant companion. To her, thinking, as she ever was thinking, about Johnny Eames, Siph was much more agreeable than might have been a younger man who would have endeavoured to make her think about himself.

Thus when she found herself riding alone in Rotten Row with Siph Dunn, she was neither disconcerted nor displeased. He had been talking to her about Lord De Guest, whom he had known,—for Siph knew everybody,—and Lily had begun to wonder whether he knew John Eames. She would have liked to hear the opinion of such a man about John Eames. She was making up her mind that she would say something about the Crawley matter,—not intending of course to mention John Eames's name,—when suddenly her tongue was paralyzed and she could not speak. At that moment they were standing near a corner, where a turning path made an angle in the iron rails, Mr. Dunn having proposed that they should wait there for a few minutes before they returned home, as it was probable that Bernard and Miss Dunstable might come up. They had been there for some five or

ten minutes, and Lily had asked her first question about the Crawleys,—inquiring of Mr. Dunn whether he had heard of a terrible accusation which had been made against a clergyman in Barsetshire,—when on a sudden her tongue was paralyzed. As they were standing, Lily's horse was turned towards the diverging path, whereas Mr. Dunn was looking the other way, towards Achilles and Apsley house. Mr. Dunn was nearer to the railings, but though they were thus looking different ways they were so placed that each could see the face of the other. Then, on a sudden, coming slowly towards her along the diverging path and leaning on the arm of another man, she saw,—Adolphus Crosbie.

She had never seen him since a day on which she had parted from him with many kisses,—with warm, pressing, eager kisses,—of which she had been nowhat ashamed. He had then been to her almost as her husband. She had trusted him entirely, and had thrown herself into his arms with a full reliance. There is often much of reticence on the part of a woman towards a man to whom she is engaged, something also of shamefacedness occasionally. There exists a shadow of doubt, at least of that hesitation which shows that in spite of vows the woman knows that a change may come, and that provision for such possible steps backward should always be within her reach. But Lily had cast all such caution to the winds. She had given herself to the man entirely, and had determined that she would sink or swim, stand or fall, live or die, by him and by his truth. He had been as false as hell. She had been in his arms, clinging to him, kissing him, swearing that her only pleasure in the world was to be with him,—with him her treasure, her promised husband; and within a month, a week, he had been false to her. There had come upon her crushing tidings, and she had for days wondered at herself that they had not killed her. But she had lived, and had forgiven him. She had still loved him, and had received new offers from him, which had been answered as the reader knows. But she had never seen him since the day on which she had parted from him at Allington, without a doubt as to his faith. Now he was before her, walking on the footpath, almost within reach of her whip.

He did not recognize her, but as he passed on he did recognize Mr. Onesiphorus Dunn, and stopped to speak to him. Or it might have been that Crosbie's friend Fowler Pratt stopped with this special object,—for Siph Dunn was an intimate friend of Fowler Pratt's. Crosbie and Siph were also acquainted, but in those days Crosbie did not care much for stopping his friends in the Park or elsewhere. He had become moody and discontented, and was generally seen going

about the world alone. On this special occasion he was having a little special conversation about money with his very old friend Fowler Pratt.

"What, Siph, is this you? You're always on horseback now," said Fowler Pratt.

"Well, yes; I have gone in a good deal for cavalry work this last month. I've been lucky enough to have a young lady to ride with me." This he said in a whisper, which the distance of Lily justified. "How d'ye do, Crosbie? One doesn't often see you on horseback, or on foot either."

"I've something to do besides going to look or to be looked at," said Crosbie. Then he raised his eyes and saw Lily's side-face, and recognized her. Had he seen her before he had been stopped on his way I think he would have passed on, endeavouring to escape observation. But as it was, his feet had been arrested before he knew of her close vicinity, and now it would seem that he was afraid of her, and was flying from her, were he at once to walk off, leaving his friend behind him. And he knew that she had seen him, and had recognized him, and was now suffering from his presence. He could not but perceive that it was so from the fixedness of her face, and from the constrained manner in which she gazed before her. His friend Fowler Pratt had never seen Miss Dale, though he knew very much of her history. Siph Dunn knew nothing of the history of Crosbie and his love, and was unaware that he and Lily had ever seen each other. There was thus no help near her to extricate her from her difficulty.

"When a man has any work to do in the world," said Siph, "he always boasts of it to his acquaintance, and curses his luck to himself. I have nothing to do and can go about to see and to be seen;—and I must own that I like it."

"Especially the being seen,—eh, Siph?" said Fowler Pratt. "I also have nothing on earth to do, and I come here every day because it is as easy to do that as to go anywhere else."

Crosbie was still looking at Lily. He could not help himself. He could not take his eyes from off her. He could see that she was as pretty as ever, that she was but very little altered. She was, in truth, somewhat stouter than in the old days, but of that he took no special notice. Should he speak to her? Should he try to catch her eye, and then raise his hat? Should he go up to her horse's head boldly, and ask her to let bygones be bygones? He had an idea that of all courses which he could pursue that was the one which she would approve the best, —which would be most efficacious for him, if with her anything from him might have any efficacy. But he could not do it. He did not know

what words he might best use. Would it become him humbly to sue to her for pardon? Or should he strive to express his unaltered love by some tone of his voice? Or should he simply ask her after her health? He made one step towards her, and he saw that the face became more rigid and more fixed than before, and then he desisted. He told himself that he was simply hateful to her. He thought that he could perceive that there was no tenderness mixed with her unabated anger.

At this moment Bernard Dale and Emily came close upon him, and Bernard saw him at once. It was through Bernard that Lily and Crosbie had come to know each other. He and Bernard Dale had been fast friends in old times, and had, of course, been bitter enemies since the day of Crosbie's treachery. They had never spoken since, though they had often seen each other, and Dale was not at all disposed to speak to him now. The moment that he recognized Crosbie he looked across to his cousin. For an instant, an idea had flashed across him that he was there by her permission,—with her assent; but it required no second glance to show him that this was not the case. "Dunn," he said, "I think we will ride on," and he put his horse into a trot. Siph, whose ear was very accurate, and who knew at once that something was wrong, trotted on with him, and Lily, of course, was not left behind. "Is there anything the matter?" said Emily to her lover.

"Nothing specially the matter," he replied; "but you were standing in company with the greatest blackguard that ever lived, and I thought we had better change our ground."

"Bernard!" said Lily, flashing on him with all the fire which her eyes could command. Then she remembered that she could not reprimand him for the offence of such abuse in such a company; so she reined in her horse and fell a-weeping.

Siph Dunn, with his wicked cleverness, knew the whole story at once, remembering that he had once heard something of Crosbie having behaved very ill to some one before he married Lady Alexandrina De Courcy. He stopped his horse also, falling a little behind Lily, so that he might not be supposed to have seen her tears, and began to hum a tune. Emily also, though not wickedly clever, understood something of it. "If Bernard says anything to make you angry, I will scold him," she said. Then the two girls rode on together in front, while Bernard fell back with Siph Dunn.

"Pratt," said Crosbie, putting his hand on his friend's shoulder as soon as the party had ridden out of hearing, "do you see that girl there in the dark blue habit?"

"What, the one nearest to the path?"

"Yes; the one nearest to the path. That is Lily Dale."

"Lily Dale!" said Fowler Pratt.

"Yes; that is Lily Dale."

"Did you speak to her?" Pratt asked.

"No; she gave me no chance. She was there but a moment. But it was herself. It seems so odd to me that I should have been thus so near her again." If there was any man to whom Crosbie could have spoken freely about Lily Dale it was this man, Fowler Pratt. Pratt was the oldest friend he had in the world, and it had happened that when he first woke to the misery that he had prepared for himself in throwing over Lily and betrothing himself to his late wife, Pratt had been the first person to whom he had communicated his sorrow. Not that he had ever been really open in his communications. It is not given to such men as Crosbie to speak openly of themselves to their friends. Nor, indeed, was Fowler Pratt one who was fond of listening to such tales. He had no such tales to tell of himself, and he thought that men and women should go through the world quietly, not subjecting themselves or their acquaintances to anxieties and emotions from peculiar conduct. But he was conscientious, and courageous also as well as prudent, and he had dared to tell Crosbie that he was behaving very badly. He had spoken his mind plainly, and had then given all the assistance in his power.

He paused a moment before he replied, weighing, like a prudent man, the force of the words he was about to utter. "It is much better as it is," he said. "It is much better that you should be as strangers for the future."

"I do not see that at all," said Crosbie. They were both leaning on the rails, and so they remained for the next twenty minutes. "I do not see that at all."

"I feel sure of it. What could come of any renewed intercourse,—even if she would allow it?"

"I might make her my wife."

"And do you think that you would be happy with her, or she with you, after what has passed?"

"I do think so."

"I do not. It might be possible that she should bring herself to marry you. Women delight to forgive injuries. They like the excitement of generosity. But she could never forget that you had had a former wife, or the circumstances under which you were married. And as for yourself, you would regret it after the first month. How could you ever speak to her of your love without speaking also of your shame?

If a man does marry he should at least be able to hold up his head before his wife."

This was very severe, but Crosbie showed no anger. "I think I should do so," he said,—"after a while."

"And then, about money? Of course you would have to tell her everything."

"Everything—of course."

"It is like enough that she might not regard that,—except that she would feel that if you could not afford to marry her when you were unembarrassed, you can hardly afford to do so when you are over head and ears in debt."

"She has money now."

"After all that has come and gone you would hardly seek Lily Dale because you want to marry a fortune."

"You are too hard on me, Pratt. You know that my only reason for seeking her is that I love her."

"I do not mean to be hard. But I have a very strong opinion that the quarrels of lovers, when they are of so very serious a nature, are a bad basis for the renewal of love. Come, let us go and dress for dinner. I am going to dine with Mrs. Thorne, the millionnaire, who married a country doctor, and who used to be called Miss Dunstable."

"I never dine out anywhere now," said Crosbie. And then they walked out of the Park together. Neither of them, of course, knew that Lily Dale was staying at the house at which Fowler Pratt was going to dine.

Lily, as she rode home, did not speak a word. She would have given worlds to be able to talk, but she could not even make a beginning. She heard Bernard and Siph Dunn chatting behind her, and hoped that they would continue to do so till she was safe within the house. They all used her well, for no one tried to draw her into conversation. Once Emily said to her, "Shall we trot a little, Lily?" And then they had moved on quickly, and the misery was soon over. As soon as she was upstairs in the house, she got Emily by herself, and explained all the mystery in a word or two. "I fear I have made a fool of myself. That was the man to whom I was once engaged." "What, Mr. Crosbie?" said Emily, who had heard the whole story from Bernard. "Yes, Mr. Crosbie; pray, do not say a word of it to anybody,—not even to your aunt. I am better now, but I was such a fool. No, dear; I won't go into the drawing-room. I'll go upstairs, and come down ready for dinner."

When she was alone she sat down in her habit, and declared to

herself that she certainly would never become the wife of Mr. Crosbie. I do not know why she should make such a declaration. She had promised her mother and John Eames that she would not do so, and that promise would certainly have bound her without any further resolutions on her own part. But, to tell the truth, the vision of the man had disenchanted her. When last she had seen him he had been as it were a god to her; and though, since that day, his conduct to her had been as ungodlike as it well might be, still the memory of the outward signs of his divinity had remained with her. It is difficult to explain how it had come to pass that the glimpse which she had had of him should have altered so much within her mind;—why she should so suddenly have come to regard him in an altered light. It was not simply that he looked to be older, and because his face was careworn. It was not only that he had lost that look of an Apollo which Lily had once in her mirth attributed to him. I think it was chiefly that she herself was older, and could no longer see a god in such a man. She had never regarded John Eames as being gifted with divinity, and had therefore always been making comparisons to his discredit. Any such comparison now would tend quite the other way. Nevertheless she would adhere to the two letters in her book. Since she had seen Mr. Crosbie she was altogether out of love with the prospect of matrimony.

She was in the room when Mr. Pratt was announced, and she at once recognized him as the man who had been with Crosbie. And when, some minutes afterwards, Siph Dunn came into the room, she could see that in their greeting allusion was made to the scene in the Park. But still it was probable that this man would not recognize her, and, if he did so, what would it matter? There were twenty people to sit down to dinner, and the chances were that she would not be called upon to exchange a word with Mr. Pratt. She had now recovered herself, and could speak freely to her friend Siph, and when Siph came and stood near her she thanked him graciously for his escort in the Park. "If it wasn't for you, Mr. Dunn, I really think I should not get any riding at all. Bernard and Miss Dunstable have only one thing to think about, and certainly I am not that one thing." She thought it probable that if she could keep Siph close to her, Mrs. Thorne, who always managed those things herself, might apportion her out to be led to dinner by her good-natured friend. But the fates were averse. The time had now come, and Lily was waiting her turn. "Mr. Fowler Pratt, let me introduce you to Miss Lily Dale," said Mrs. Thorne. Lily could perceive that Mr. Pratt was startled. The sign he gave was

the least possible sign in the world; but still it sufficed for Lily to perceive it. She put her hand upon his arm, and walked down with him to the dining-room without giving him the slightest cause to suppose that she knew who he was.

"I think I saw you in the Park riding?" he said.

"Yes, I was there; we go nearly every day."

"I never ride; I was walking."

"It seems to me that the people don't go there to walk, but to stand still," said Lily. "I cannot understand how so many people can bear to loiter about in that way—leaning on the rails and doing nothing."

"It is about as good as the riding, and costs less money. That is all that can be said for it. Do you live chiefly in town?"

"O dear, no; I live altogether in the country. I'm only up here because a cousin is going to be married."

"Captain Dale you mean—to Miss Dunstable?" said Fowler Pratt.

"When they have been joined together in holy matrimony, I shall go down to the country, and never, I suppose, come up to London again."

"You do not like London?"

"Not as a residence, I think," said Lily. "But of course one's likings and dislikings on such a matter depend on circumstances. I live with my mother, and all my relatives live near us. Of course I like the country best, because they are there."

"Young ladies so often have a different way of looking at this subject. I shouldn't wonder if Miss Dunstable's views about it were altogether of another sort. Young ladies generally expect to be taken away from their fathers and mothers, and uncles and aunts."

"But you see I expect to be left with mine," said Lily. After that she turned as much away from Mr. Fowler Pratt as she could, having taken an aversion to him. What business had he to talk to her about being taken away from her uncles and aunts? She had seen him with Mr. Crosbie, and it might be possible that they were intimate friends. It might be that Mr. Pratt was asking questions in Mr. Crosbie's interest. Let that be as it might, she would answer no more questions from him further than ordinary good breeding should require of her.

"She is a nice girl, certainly," said Fowler Pratt to himself, as he walked home, "and I have no doubt would make a good, ordinary, every-day wife. But she is not such a paragon that a man should condescend to grovel in the dirt for her."

That night Lily told Emily Dunstable the whole of Mr. Crosbie's history as far as she knew it, and also explained her new aversion to Mr. Fowler Pratt. "They are very great friends," said Emily.

"Bernard has told me so; and you may be sure that Mr. Pratt knew the whole history before he came here. I am so sorry that my aunt asked him."

"It does not signify in the least," said Lily. "Even if I were to meet Mr. Crosbie I don't think I should make such a fool of myself again. As it is, I can only hope he did not see it."

"I am sure he did not."

Then there was a pause, during which Lily sat with her face resting on both her hands. "It is wonderful how much he is altered," she said at last.

"Think how much he has suffered."

"I suppose I am altered as much, only I do not see it in myself."

"I don't know what you were, but I don't think you can have changed much. You no doubt have suffered too, but not as he has done."

"Oh, as for that, I have done very well. I think I'll go to bed now. The riding makes me so sleepy."

CHAPTER LIV.

THE CLERICAL COMMISSION.

It was at last arranged that the five clergymen selected should meet at Dr. Tempest's house in Silverbridge to make inquiry and report to the bishop whether the circumstances connected with the cheque for twenty pounds were of such a nature as to make it incumbent on him to institute proceedings against Mr. Crawley in the Court of Arches. Dr. Tempest had acted upon the letter which he had received from the bishop, exactly as though there had been no meeting at the palace, no quarrel to the death between him and Mrs. Proudie. He was a prudent man, gifted with the great power of holding his tongue, and had not spoken a word, even to his wife, of what had occurred. After such a victory our old friend the archdeacon would have blown his own trumpet loudly among his friends. Plumstead would have heard of it instantly, and the pæan would have been sung out in the neighbouring parishes of Eiderdown, Stogpingum, and St. Ewolds. The high-street of Barchester would have known of it, and the very bedesmen in Hiram's Hospital would have told among themselves the terrible discomfiture of the bishop and his lady. But Dr. Tempest spoke no word of it to anybody. He wrote letters to the two clergymen named by

the bishop, and himself selected two others out of his own rural deanery, and suggested to them all a day at which a preliminary meeting should be held at his own house. The two who were invited by him were Mr. Oriel, the rector of Greshamsbury, and Mr. Robarts, the vicar of Framley. They all assented to the proposition, and on the day named assembled themselves at Silverbridge.

It was now April, and the judges were to come into Barchester before the end of the month. What then could be the use of this ecclesiastical inquiry exactly at the same time? Men and women declared that it was a double prosecution, and that a double prosecution for the same offence was a course of action opposed to the feelings and traditions of the country. Miss Anne Prettyman went so far as to say that it was unconstitutional, and Mary Walker declared that no human being except Mrs. Proudie would ever have been guilty of such cruelty. "Don't tell me about the bishop, John," she said; "the bishop is a cypher." "You may be sure Dr. Tempest would not have a hand in it if it were not right," said John Walker. "My dear Mr. John," said Miss Anne Prettyman, "Dr. Tempest is as hard as a bar of iron, and always was. But I am surprised that Mr. Robarts should take a part in it."

In the meantime, at the palace, Mrs. Proudie had been reduced to learn what was going on from Mr. Thumble. The bishop had never spoken a word to her respecting Mr. Crawley since that terrible day on which Dr. Tempest had witnessed his imbecility,—having absolutely declined to answer when his wife had mentioned the subject. "You won't speak to me about it, my dear?" she had said to him, when he had thus declined, remonstrating more in sorrow than in anger. "No; I won't," the bishop had replied; "there has been a great deal too much talking about it. It has broken my heart already, I know." These were very bad days in the palace. Mrs. Proudie affected to be satisfied with what was being done. She talked to Mr. Thumble about Mr. Crawley and the cheque, as though everything were arranged quite to her satisfaction,—as though everything, indeed, had been arranged by herself. But everybody about the house could see that the manner of the woman was altogether altered. She was milder than usual with the servants and was almost too gentle in her usage of her husband. It seemed as though something had happened to frighten her and break her spirit, and it was whispered about through the palace that she was afraid that the bishop was dying. As for him, he hardly left his own sitting-room in these days, except when he joined the family at breakfast and at dinner. And in his study he did little or nothing. He would smile when his

chaplain went to him, and give some trifling verbal directions; but for days he scarcely ever took a pen in his hands, and though he took up many books he read hardly a page. How often he told his wife in those days that he was broken-hearted, no one but his wife ever knew.

"What has happened that you should speak like that?" she said to him once. "What has broken your heart?"

"You," he replied. "You; you have done it."

"Oh, Tom," she said, going back into the memory of very far distant days in her nomenclature, "how can you speak to me so cruelly as that! That it should come to that between you and me, after all!"

"Why did you not go away and leave me that day when I told you?"

"Did you ever know a woman who liked to be turned out of a room in her own house?" said Mrs. Proudie. When Mrs. Proudie had condescended so far as this, it must be admitted that in those days there was great trouble in the palace.

Mr. Thumble, on the day before he went to Silverbridge, asked for an audience with the bishop in order that he might receive instructions. He had been strictly desired to do this by Mrs. Proudie, and had not dared to disobey her injunctions,—thinking, however, himself, that his doing so was inexpedient. "I have got nothing to say to you about it; not a word," said the bishop crossly. "I thought that perhaps you might like to see me before I started," pleaded Mr. Thumble very humbly. "I don't want to see you at all," said the bishop; "you are going there to exercise your own judgment,—if you have got any; and you ought not to come to me." After that Mr. Thumble began to think that Mrs. Proudie was right, and that the bishop was near his dissolution.

Mr. Thumble and Mr. Quiverful went over to Silverbridge together in a gig, hired from the Dragon of Wantly—as to the cost of which there arose among them a not unnatural apprehension which amounted at last almost to dismay. "I don't mind it so much for once," said Mr. Quiverful, "but if many such meetings are necessary, I for one can't afford it, and I won't do it. A man with my family can't allow himself to be money out of pocket in that way." "It is hard," said Mr. Thumble. "She ought to pay it herself, out of her own pocket," said Mr. Quiverful. He had had concerns with the palace when Mrs. Proudie was in the full swing of her dominion, and had not as yet begun to suspect that there might possibly be a change.

Mr. Oriel and Mr. Robarts were already sitting with Dr. Tempest when the other two clergymen were shown into the room. When the first greetings were over luncheon was announced, and while they were eating not a word was said about Mr. Crawley. The ladies of the

family were not present, and the five clergymen sat round the table alone. It would have been difficult to have got together five gentlemen less likely to act with one mind and one spirit ;—and perhaps it was all the better for Mr. Crawley that it should be so. Dr. Tempest himself was a man peculiarly capable of exercising the functions of a judge in such a matter, had he sat alone as a judge ; but he was one who would be almost sure to differ from others who sat as equal assessors with him. Mr. Oriel was a gentleman at all points ; but he was very shy, very reticent, and altogether uninstructed in the ordinary daily intercourse of man with man. Any one knowing him might have predicted of him that he would be sure on such an occasion as this to be found floundering in a sea of doubts. Mr. Quiverful was the father of a large family, whose whole life had been devoted to fighting a cruel world on behalf of his wife and children. That fight he had fought bravely ; but it had left him no energy for any other business. Mr. Thumble was a poor creature,—so poor a creature that, in spite of a small restless ambition to be doing something, he was almost cowed by the hard lines of Dr. Tempest's brow. The Rev. Mark Robarts was a man of the world, and a clever fellow, and did not stand in awe of anybody, —unless it might be, in a very moderate degree, of his patrons the Luftons, whom he was bound to respect ; but his cleverness was not the cleverness needed by a judge. He was essentially a partisan, and would be sure to vote against the bishop in such a matter as this now before him. There was a palace faction in the diocese, and an anti-palace faction. Mr. Thumble and Mr. Quiverful belonged to one, and Mr. Oriel and Mr. Robarts to the other. Mr. Thumble was too weak to stick to his faction against the strength of such a man as Dr. Tempest. Mr. Quiverful would be too indifferent to do so,—unless his interest were concerned. Mr. Oriel would be too conscientious to regard his own side on such an occasion as this. But Mark Robarts would be sure to support his friends and oppose his enemies, let the case be what it might. "Now, gentlemen, if you please, we will go into the other room," said Dr. Tempest. They went into the other room, and there they found five chairs arranged for them round the table. Not a word had as yet been said about Mr. Crawley, and no one of the four strangers knew whether Mr. Crawley was to appear before them on that day or not.

"Gentlemen," said Dr. Tempest, seating himself at once in an arm-chair placed at the middle of the table, "I think it will be well to explain to you at first what, as I regard the matter, is the extent of the work which we are called upon to perform. It is of its nature very

disagreeable. It cannot but be so, let it be ever so limited. Here is a brother clergyman and a gentleman, living among us, and doing his duty, as we are told, in a most exemplary manner; and suddenly we hear that he is accused of a theft. The matter is brought before the magistrates, of whom I myself was one, and he was committed for trial. There is therefore primâ facie evidence of his guilt. But I do not think that we need go into the question of his guilt at all." When he said this, the other four all looked up at him in astonishment. "I thought that we had been summoned here for that purpose," said Mr. Robarts. "Not at all, as I take it," said the doctor. "Were we to commence any such inquiry, the jury would have given their verdict before we could come to any conclusion; and it would be impossible for us to oppose that verdict, whether it declares this unfortunate gentleman to be innocent or to be guilty. If the jury shall say that he is innocent, there is an end of the matter altogether. He would go back to his parish amidst the sympathy and congratulations of his friends. That is what we should all wish."

"Of course it is," said Mr. Robarts. They all declared that was their desire, as a matter of course; and Mr. Thumble said it louder than any one else.

"But if he be found guilty, then will come that difficulty to the bishop, in which we are bound to give him any assistance within our power."

"Of course we are," said Mr. Thumble, who, having heard his own voice once, and having liked the sound, thought that he might creep into a little importance by using it on any occasion that opened itself for him.

"If you will allow me, sir, I will venture to state my views as shortly as I can," said Dr. Tempest. "That may perhaps be the most expeditious course for us all in the end."

"Oh, certainly," said Mr. Thumble. "I didn't mean to interrupt."

"In the case of his being found guilty," continued the doctor, "there will arise the question whether the punishment awarded to him by the judge should suffice for ecclesiastical purposes. Suppose, for instance, that he should be imprisoned for two months, should he be allowed to return to his living at the expiration of that term?"

"I think he ought," said Mr. Robarts;—"considering all things."

"I don't see why he shouldn't," said Mr. Quiverful.

Mr. Oriel sat listening patiently, and Mr. Thumble looked up to the doctor, expecting to hear some opinion expressed by him with which he might coincide.

"There certainly are reasons why he should not," said Dr. Tempest; "though I by no means say that those reasons are conclusive in the present case. In the first place, a man who has stolen money can hardly be a fitting person to teach others not to steal."

"You must look to the circumstances," said Robarts.

"Yes, that is true; but just bear with me a moment. It cannot, at any rate, be thought that a clergyman should come out of prison and go to his living without any notice from his bishop, simply because he has already been punished under the common law. If this were so, a clergyman might be fined ten days running for being drunk in the street,—five shillings each time,—and at the end of that time might set his bishop at defiance. When a clergyman has shown himself to be utterly unfit for clerical duties, he must not be held to be protected from ecclesiastical censure or from deprivation by the action of the common law."

"But Mr. Crawley has not shown himself to be unfit," said Robarts.

"That is begging the question, Robarts," said the doctor.

"Just so," said Mr. Thumble. Then Mr. Robarts gave a look at Mr. Thumble, and Mr. Thumble retired into his shoes.

"That is the question as to which we are called upon to advise the bishop," continued Dr. Tempest. "And I must say that I think the bishop is right. If he were to allow the matter to pass by without notice,—that is to say, in the event of Mr. Crawley being pronounced to be guilty by a jury,—he would, I think, neglect his duty. Now, I have been informed that the bishop has recommended Mr. Crawley to desist from his duties till the trial be over, and that Mr. Crawley has declined to take the bishop's advice.

"That is true," said Mr. Thumble. "He altogether disregarded the bishop."

"I cannot say that I think he was wrong," said Dr. Tempest.

"I think he was quite right," said Mr. Robarts.

"A bishop in almost all cases is entitled to the obedience of his clergy," said Mr. Oriel.

"I must say that I agree with you, sir," said Mr. Thumble.

"The income is not large, and I suppose that it would have gone with the duties," said Mr. Quiverful. "It is very hard for a man with a family to live when his income has been stopped."

"Be that as it may," continued the doctor, "the bishop feels that it may be his duty to oppose the return of Mr. Crawley to his pulpit, and that he can oppose it in no other way than by proceeding against

Mr. Crawley under the Clerical Offences Act. I propose, therefore, that we should invite Mr. Crawley to attend here——"

"Mr. Crawley is not coming here to-day, then?" said Mr. Robarts.

"I thought it useless to ask for his attendance until we had settled on our course of action," said Dr. Tempest. "If we are all agreed, I will beg him to come here on this day week, when we will meet again. And we will then ask him whether he will submit himself to the bishop's decision, in the event of the jury finding him guilty. If he should decline to do so, we can only then form our opinion as to what will be the bishop's duty by reference to the facts as they are elicited at the trial. If Mr. Crawley should choose to make to us any statement as to his own case, of course we shall be willing to receive it. That is my idea of what had better be done; and now, if any gentleman has any other proposition to make, of course we shall be pleased to hear him." Dr. Tempest, as he said this, looked round upon his companions, as though his pleasure, under the circumstances suggested by himself, would be very doubtful.

"I don't suppose we can do anything better," said Mr. Robarts. "I think it a pity, however, that any steps should have been taken by the bishop before the trial."

"The bishop has been placed in a very delicate position," said Mr. Thumble, pleading for his patron.

"I don't know the meaning of the word 'delicate,'" said Robarts. "I think his duty was very clear, to avoid interference whilst the matter is, so to say, before the judge."

"Nobody has anything else to propose?" said Dr. Tempest. "Then I will write to Mr. Crawley, and you, gentlemen, will perhaps do me the honour of meeting me here at one o'clock on this day week." Then the meeting was over, and the four clergymen having shaken hands with Dr. Tempest in the hall, all promised that they would return on that day week. So far, Dr. Tempest had carried his point exactly as he might have done had the four gentlemen been represented by the chairs on which they had sat.

"I shan't come again, all the same, unless I know where I'm to get my expenses," said Mr. Quiverful, as he got into the gig.

"I shall come," said Mr. Thumble, "because I think it a duty. Of course it is a hardship." Mr. Thumble liked the idea of being joined with such men as Dr. Tempest, and Mr. Oriel, and Mr. Robarts, and would any day have paid the expense of a gig from Barchester to Silverbridge out of his own pocket, for the sake of sitting with such benchfellows on any clerical inquiry.

"One's first duty is to one's own wife and family," said Mr. Quiverful.

"Well, yes; in a way, of course, that is quite true, Mr. Quiverful; and when we know how very inadequate are the incomes of the working clergy, we cannot but feel ourselves to be, if I may so say, put upon, when we have to defray the expenses incidental to special duties out of our own pockets. I think, you know,—I don't mind saying this to you, —that the palace should have provided us with a chaise and pair." This was ungrateful on the part of Mr. Thumble, who had been permitted to ride miles upon miles to various outlying clerical duties upon the bishop's worn-out cob. "You see," continued Mr. Thumble, "you and I go specially to represent the palace, and the palace ought to remember that. I think there ought to have been a chaise and pair; I do indeed."

"I don't care much what the conveyance is," said Mr. Quiverful; "but I certainly shall pay nothing more out of my own pocket;—certainly I shall not."

"The result will be that the palace will be thrown over if they don't take care," said Mr. Thumble. "Tempest, however, seems to be pretty steady. Tempest, I think, is steady. You see he is getting tired of parish work, and would like to go into the close. That's what he is looking out for. Did you ever see such a fellow as that Robarts,—just look at him;—quite indecent, wasn't he? He thinks he can have his own way in everything, just because his sister married a lord. I do hate to see all that meanness."

Mark Robarts and Caleb Oriel left Silverbridge in another gig by the same road, and soon passed their brethren, as Mr. Robarts was in the habit of driving a large, quick-stepping horse. The last remarks were being made as the dust from the vicar of Framley's wheels saluted the faces of the two slower clergymen. Mr. Oriel had promised to dine and sleep at Framley, and therefore returned in Mr. Robarts' gig.

"Quite unnecessary, all this fuss; don't you think so?" said Mr. Robarts.

"I am not quite sure," said Mr. Oriel. "I can understand that the bishop may have found a difficulty."

"The bishop, indeed! The bishop doesn't care two straws about it. It's Mrs. Proudie! She has put her finger on the poor man's neck because he has not put his neck beneath her feet; and now she thinks she can crush him,—as she would crush you or me, if it were in her power. That's about the long and the short of the bishop's solicitude."

"You are very hard on him," said Mr. Oriel.

"I know him;—and am not at all hard on him. She is hard upon

him if you like. Tempest is fair. He is very fair, and as long as no one meddles with him he won't do amiss. I can't hold my tongue always, but I often know that it is better that I should."

Dr. Tempest said not a word to any one on the subject, not even in his own defence. And yet he was sorely tempted. On the very day of the meeting he dined at Mr. Walker's in Silverbridge, and there submitted to be talked at by all the ladies and most of the gentlemen present, without saying a word in his own defence. And yet a word or two would have been so easy and so conclusive.

"Oh, Dr. Tempest," said Mary Walker, "I am so sorry that you have joined the bishop."

"Are you, my dear?" said he. "It is generally thought well that a parish clergyman should agree with his bishop."

"But you know, Dr. Tempest, that you don't agree with your bishop generally."

"Then it is the more fortunate that I shall be able to agree with him on this occasion."

Major Grantly was present at the dinner, and ventured to ask the doctor in the course of the evening what he thought would be done. "I should not venture to ask such a question, Dr. Tempest," he said, "unless I had the strongest possible reason to justify my anxiety."

"I don't know that I can tell you anything, Major Grantly," said the doctor. "We did not even see Mr. Crawley to-day. But the real truth is that he must stand or fall as the jury shall find him guilty or not guilty. It would be the same in any profession. Could a captain in the army hold up his head in his regiment after he had been tried and found guilty of stealing twenty pounds?"

"I don't think he could," said the major.

"Neither can a clergyman," said the doctor. "The bishop can neither make him nor mar him. It is the jury that must do it."

CHAPTER LV.

FRAMLEY PARSONAGE.

At this time Grace Crawley was at Framley Parsonage. Old Lady Lufton's strategy had been quite intelligible, but some people said that in point of etiquette and judgment and moral conduct, it was indefensible. Her vicar, Mr. Robarts, had been selected to be one of the clergymen who was to sit in ecclesiastical judgment upon Mr. Crawley, and while he was so sitting Mr. Crawley's daughter was staying in Mr. Robarts' house as a visitor with his wife! It might be that there was no harm in this. Lady Lufton, when the apparent impropriety was pointed out to her by no less a person than Archdeacon Grantly, ridiculed the idea. "My dear archdeacon," Lady Lufton had said, "we all know the bishop to be such a fool and the bishop's wife to be such a knave, that we cannot allow ourselves to be governed in this matter by ordinary rules. Do you not think that it is expedient to show how utterly we disregard his judgment and her malice?" The archdeacon had hesitated much before he spoke to Lady Lufton, whether he should address himself to her or to Mr. Robarts,—or indeed to Mrs. Robarts. But he had become aware that the proposition as to the visit had originated with Lady Lufton, and he had therefore decided on speaking to her. He had not condescended to say a word as to his son, nor would he so condescend. Nor could he go from Lady Lufton to Mr. Robarts, having once failed with her ladyship. Indeed, in giving him his due, we must acknowledge that his disapprobation of Lady Lufton's strategy arose rather from his true conviction as to its impropriety, than from any fear lest this attention paid to Miss Crawley should tend to bring about her marriage with his son. By this time he hated the very name of Crawley. He hated it the more because in hating it he had to put himself for the time on the same side with Mrs. Proudie. But for all that he would not condescend to any unworthy mode of fighting. He thought it wrong that the young lady should be invited to Framley Parsonage at this moment, and he said so to the person who had, as he thought, in truth, given the invitation; but he would not allow his own personal motives to induce him to carry on the argument with Lady Lufton. "The bishop is a fool," he said, "and the bishop's wife is a knave. Nevertheless I would not have had

the young lady over to Framley at this moment. If, however, you think it right and Robarts thinks it right, there is an end of it."

"Upon my word we do," said Lady Lufton.

I am induced to think that Mr. Robarts was not quite confident of the expediency of what he was doing by the way in which he mentioned to Mr. Oriel the fact of Miss Crawley's presence at the parsonage as he drove that gentleman home in his gig. They had been talking about Mr. Crawley when he suddenly turned himself round, so that he could look at his companion, and said, "Miss Crawley is staying with us at the parsonage at the present moment."

"What! Mr. Crawley's daughter?" said Mr. Oriel, showing plainly by his voice that the tidings had much surprised him.

"Yes; Mr. Crawley's daughter."

"Oh, indeed. I did not know that you were on those terms with the family."

"We have known them for the last seven or eight years," said Mark; "and though I should be giving you a false notion if I were to say that I myself have known them intimately,—for Crawley is a man whom it is quite impossible to know intimately,—yet the womankind at Framley have known them. My sister stayed with them over at Hogglestock for some time."

"What; Lady Lufton?"

"Yes; my sister Lucy. It was just before her marriage. There was a lot of trouble, and the Crawleys were all ill, and she went to nurse them. And then the old lady took them up, and altogether there came to be a sort of feeling that they were to be regarded as friends. They are always in trouble, and now in this special trouble the women between them have thought it best to have the girl over at Framley. Of course I had a kind of feeling about this commission; but as I knew that it would make no difference with me I did not think it necessary to put my veto upon the visit." Mr. Oriel said nothing further, but Mark Robarts was aware that Mr. Oriel did not quite approve of the visit.

That morning old Lady Lufton herself had come across to the parsonage with the express view of bidding all the parsonage party to come across to the hall to dine. "You can tell Mr. Oriel, Fanny, with Lucy's compliments, how delighted she will be to see him." Old Lady Lufton always spoke of her daughter-in-law as the mistress of the house. "If you think he is particular, you know, we will send a note across." Mrs. Robarts said that she supposed Mr. Oriel would not be particular, but, looking at Grace, made some faint excuse. "You must

come, my dear," said Lady Lufton. "Lucy wishes it particularly." Mrs. Robarts did not know how to say that she would not come; and so the matter stood,—when Mrs. Robarts was called upon to leave the room for a moment, and Lady Lufton and Grace were left alone.

"Dear Lady Lufton," said Grace, getting up suddenly from her chair; "will you do me a favour,—a great favour?" She spoke with an energy which quite surprised the old lady, and caused her almost to start from her seat.

"I don't like making promises," said Lady Lufton; "but anything I can do with propriety I will."

"You can do this. Pray let me stay here to-day. You don't understand how I feel about going out while papa is in this way. I know how kind and how good you all are; and when dear Mrs. Robarts asked me here, and mamma said that I had better come, I could not refuse. But indeed, indeed, I had rather not go out to a dinner-party."

"It is not a party, my dear girl," said Lady Lufton, with the kindest voice which she knew how to assume. "And you must remember that my daughter-in-law regards you as so very old a friend! You remember, of course, when she was staying over at Hogglestock?"

"Indeed I do. I remember it well."

"And therefore you should not regard it as going out. There will be nobody there but ourselves and the people from this house."

"But it will be going out, Lady Lufton; and I do hope you will let me stay here. You cannot think how I feel it. Of course I cannot go without something like dressing, and—and—and—— In poor papa's state I feel that I ought not to do anything that looks like gaiety. I ought never to forget it;—not for a moment."

There was a tear in Lady Lufton's eye as she said,—"My dear, you shan't come. You and Fanny shall stop and dine here by yourselves. The gentlemen shall come."

"Do let Mrs. Robarts go, please," said Grace.

"I won't do anything of the kind," said Lady Lufton. Then, when Mrs. Robarts returned to the room, her ladyship explained it all in two words. "Whilst you have been away, my dear, Grace has begged off, and therefore we have decided that Mr. Oriel and Mr. Robarts shall come without you."

"I am so sorry, Mrs. Robarts," said Grace.

"Pooh, pooh," said Lady Lufton. "Fanny and I have known each other quite long enough not to stand on any compliments,—haven't we, my dear? I must get home now, as all the morning has

gone by. Fanny my dear, I want to speak to you." Then she expressed her opinion of Grace Crawley as she walked across the parsonage garden with Mrs. Robarts. "She is a very nice girl, and a very good girl, I am sure; and she shows excellent feeling. Whatever happens we must take care of her. And, Fanny, have you observed how handsome she is?"

"We think her very pretty."

"She is more than pretty when she has a little fire in her eyes. She is downright handsome,—or will be when she fills out a little. I tell you what, my dear; she'll make havoc with somebody yet; you see if she doesn't. By—by. Tell the two gentlemen to be up by seven punctually." And then Lady Lufton went home.

Grace so contrived that Mr. Oriel came and went without seeing her. There was a separate nursery breakfast at the parsonage, and by special permission Grace was allowed to have her tea and bread-and-butter on the next morning with the children. "I thought you told me Miss Crawley was here," said Mr. Oriel, as the two clergymen stood waiting for the gig that was to take the visitor away to Barchester.

"So she is," said Robarts; "but she likes to hide herself, because of her father's trouble. You can't blame her."

"No, indeed," said Mr. Oriel.

"Poor girl. If you knew her you would not only pity her, but like her."

"Is she,—what you call——?"

"You mean, is she a lady?"

"Of course she is by birth, and all that," said Mr. Oriel, apologizing for his inquiry.

"I don't think there is another girl in the county so well educated," said Mr. Robarts.

"Indeed! I had no idea of that."

"And we think her a great beauty. As for manners, I never saw a girl with a prettier way of her own."

"Dear me," said Mr. Oriel. "I wish she had come down to breakfast."

It will have been perceived that old Lady Lufton had heard nothing of Major Grantly's offence; that she had no knowledge that Grace had already made havoc, as she had called it,—had, in truth, made very sad havoc, at Plumstead. She did not, therefore, think much about it when her son told her upon her return home from the parsonage on that afternoon that Major Grantly had come over from Cosby Lodge, and that he was going to dine and sleep at Framley Court. Some

slight idea of thankfulness came across her mind that she had not betrayed Grace Crawley into a meeting with a stranger. "I asked him to come some day before we went up to town," said his lordship; "and I am glad he has come to-day, as two clergymen to one's self are, at any rate, one too many." So Major Grantly dined and slept at the Court.

But Mrs. Robarts was in a great flurry when she was told of this by her husband on his return from the dinner. Mrs. Crawley had found an opportunity of telling the story of Major Grantly's love to Mrs. Robarts before she had sent her daughter to Framley, knowing that the families were intimate, and thinking it right that there should be some precaution.

"I wonder whether he will come up here," Mrs. Robarts had said.

"Probably not," said the vicar. "He said he was going home early."

"I hope he will not come—for Grace's sake," said Mrs. Robarts. She hesitated whether she should tell her husband. She always did tell him everything. But on this occasion she thought she had no right to do so, and she kept the secret. "Don't do anything to bring him up, dear."

"You needn't be afraid. He won't come," said the vicar. On the following morning, as soon as Mr. Oriel was gone, Mr. Robarts went out,—about his parish he would probably have called it; but in half an hour he might have been seen strolling about the Court stable-yard with Lord Lufton. "Where is Grantly?" asked the vicar. "I don't know where he is," said his lordship. "He has sloped off somewhere." The major had sloped off to the parsonage, well knowing in what nest his dove was lying hid; and he and the vicar had passed each other. The major had gone out at the front gate, and the vicar had gone in at the stable entrance.

The two clergymen had hardly taken their departure when Major Grantly knocked at the parsonage door. He had come so early that Mrs. Robarts had taken no precautions,—even had there been any precautions which she would have thought it right to take. Grace was in the act of coming down the stairs, not having heard the knock at the door, and thus she found her lover in the hall. He had asked, of course, for Mrs. Robarts, and thus they two entered the drawing-room together. They had not had time to speak when the servant opened the drawing-room door to announce the visitor. There had been no word spoken between Mrs. Robarts and Grace about Major Grantly, but the mother had told the daughter of what she had said to Mrs. Robarts.

"Grace," said the major, "I am so glad to find you!" Then he turned to Mrs. Robarts with his open hand. "You won't take it uncivil of me if I say that my visit is not entirely to yourself? I think I may take upon myself to say that I and Miss Crawley are old friends. May I not?"

Grace could not answer a word. "Mrs. Crawley told me that you had known her at Silverbridge," said Mrs. Roberts, driven to say something, but feeling that she was blundering.

"I came over to Framley yesterday because I heard that she was here. Am I wrong to come up here to see her?"

"I think she must answer that for herself, Major Grantly."

"Am I wrong, Grace?" Grace thought that he was the finest gentleman and the noblest lover that had ever shown his devotion to a woman, and was stirred by a mighty resolve that if it ever should be in her power to reward him after any fashion, she would pour out the reward with a very full hand indeed. But what was she to say on the present moment? "Am I wrong, Grace?" he said, repeating his question with so much emphasis, that she was positively driven to answer it.

"I do not think you are wrong at all. How can I say you are wrong when you are so good? If I could be your servant I would serve you. But I can be nothing to you, because of papa's disgrace. Dear Mrs. Robarts, I cannot stay. You must answer him for me." And having thus made her speech she escaped from the room.

It may suffice to say further now that the major did not see Grace again during that visit at Framley.

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